DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 333 432 CS 212 873

AUTHOR Marshall, James D.; And Others
TITLE Discussions of Literature in Lower-Track Classrooms. Report Series 2.10.
INSTITUTION Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature, Albany, NY.
SPONS AGENCY National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 90
CONTRACT G008720278
NOTE 49p.
AVAILABLE FROM Literature Center, University at Albany Ed B-9, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12222.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Influences; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); Educational Research; *English Instruction; Literature Appreciation; Secondary Education; *Social Influences; Student Attitudes; *Student Needs; *Student Participation; Track System (Education)
IDENTIFIERS Discourse Aims; English Teachers; *Lower Track Students; Teacher Researchers

ABSTRACT

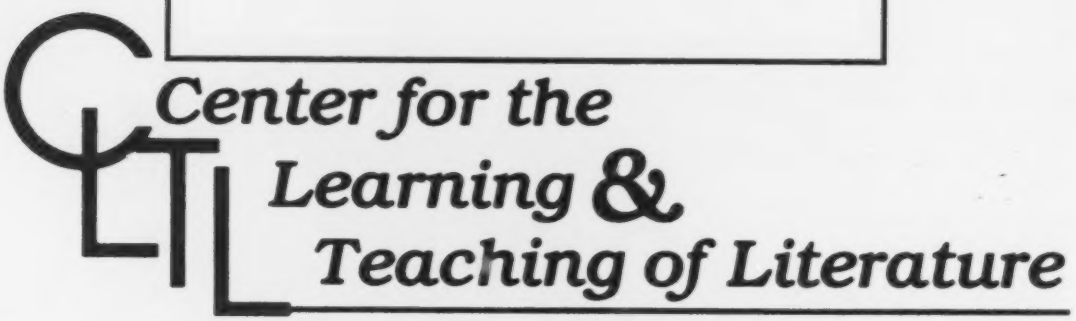
A study examined the basic patterns of oral discourse in five lower-track, high school English classrooms, and the purposes driving the activity from teachers' and students' perspectives. Five experienced literature teacher-researchers each studied one teacher as that teacher taught an instructional unit on literary text. Results showed that: (1) teachers dominated the discussions; (2) teachers used their turns largely to inform, question, and respond; (3) the kinds of informative remarks made by students reflected almost exactly the kinds of questions their teachers asked them; and (4) teachers responded to their students' contributions most often by restating what had been said. Students in lower-track classrooms seemed to require more supportive information and response from their teachers than students in non lower-track classrooms. These results suggest that teachers should do more to involve their students in classroom talk, but that the problems and patterns observed were actually due to larger social and cultural forces that seemed to resist teachers' strategies and theories. Results showed that a teacher's challenge is to remember that school is only part of a larger culture, and that the larger culture will always find a way to enter the classrooms. (Fourteen tables of data are included; an excerpt of a class discussion is attached.) (PRA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED333432

Discussions of Literature in Lower-Track Classrooms

James D. Marshall
Mary Beth Klages
Richard Fehlman



CS212873

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. Applebee

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

University at Albany
State University of New York
School of Education
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12222

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Discussions of Literature in Lower-Track Classrooms

James D. Marshall
Mary Beth Klages
Richard Fehlman

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature
University at Albany
State University of New York
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12222

Report Series 2.10

1990

Preparation of this report was supported in part by grant number G008720278, which is cosponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI/ED), and by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI/ED or NEA, and no official endorsement of either agency should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature is a research and development center located at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The Center was established in 1987 with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Center's mission is to improve the teaching of content knowledge and critical-thinking strategies that contribute to literary understanding, particularly at the middle and high school levels.

Center-sponsored research falls into three broad areas: 1) surveys of current practice in the teaching of literature, including studies of both what is taught and how it is taught; 2) studies of alternative approaches to instruction and their effects on students' knowledge of literature and critical-thinking abilities; and 3) studies of alternative approaches to the assessment of literature achievement, including both classroom-based and larger-scale approaches to testing.

The Center also promotes good practice in the teaching of literature through conferences and seminars, through the development of computerised bibliographies on research and practice in the teaching of literature, and through publications that present the Center's own research and provide other resources for research and practice. To receive a list of current publications, please write to CLTL, School of Education, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222.

Director:	Arthur N. Applebee	Center Faculty:	Lil Brannon
			Eugene Garber
Co-Directors:	Judith A. Langer		Peter Johnston
	Alan C. Purves		C.H. Knoblauch
			James Marshall
Assistant Director:	Genevieve T. Bronk		Suzanne Miller
			Wayne Ross
			Sean Walmsley

Discussions of Literature in Lower-Track Classrooms

James D. Marshall
Mary Beth Klages
Richard Fehlman

University of Iowa

Introduction

Recent research on the teaching of literature has provided an increasingly detailed portrait of how that teaching proceeds and why it proceeds as it does. Reports from Applebee (1989a; 1989b) have examined such issues from a national perspective, surveying the book-length works most frequently taught in secondary schools and analyzing the characteristics of school programs with reputations for excellence in the teaching of English. At the same time, reports from Marshall (1989), Hillocks (in press), and Nystrand & Gamoran (in press) have studied the teaching of literature within individual classrooms, tracing the basic patterns of discourse during discussions of literature. And finally, research by Langer (1989) has provided a perspective on the thinking processes individual readers employ to make sense of texts, both literary and non-literary.

Taken together, this body of work portrays the teaching of literature as a difficult and complicated enterprise in which teachers must somehow balance dual obligations. On the one hand, they feel accountable for introducing their students to accepted texts and to conventional readings of those texts (Applebee, 1989a; Marshall, 1989) -- a task in which their own role would be central. On the other hand, though, they feel equally responsible for orchestrating activities in which students can "make meaning" for themselves, and during which their own role would be supportive but minimal. Such countervailing purposes seem to inform teachers' selection of texts, the kinds of discussions they lead, and the responses their students make to those texts and discussions.

Though recent descriptions of literature teaching have become increasingly rich, they have focussed largely on classrooms populated by college-bound students. It is the programs for these students, as Applebee (1989a) points out, that "were cited with most pride by teachers and department chairs" (p. 36). It was in the programs for these students that there seemed to be a greater effort on the part of teachers to introduce students to standard classic texts (Applebee, 1989b) and a greater sense of responsibility for preparing students in the kinds of literary analysis they might confront in college (Marshall, 1987; 1989). What we have seldom studied are those programs that are only rarely "cited with pride," where students are not likely to be going on to college and where teachers may not feel a responsibility to teach classic texts in academically traditional ways. We know little or nothing, in other words, about the purposes that inform teachers' and students' efforts in such classrooms, about the special problems that are found there, or the ways teachers and students talk to one another about the texts they are reading.

The purpose of this report is to describe the basic patterns of oral discourse in five lower-track English classrooms during classroom discussions of literature. Additionally, the

purposes driving the activity from teachers' and students' perspectives are examined.

Method

Five teacher-researchers, experienced teachers of literature, each studied one teacher as that teacher taught an instructional unit on a literary text. Prior to the study, the teacher-researchers had been active members of workshops sponsored by the National Writing Project and for several years had participated in an ongoing seminar that focused on issues in literary theory and the teaching of literature. The data they collected individually on the five teachers were aggregated for this report.

Participants

Five teachers of English and their students participated in this study. They were chosen by the teacher-researchers on the basis of their experience and their reputations as excellent instructors, especially in their work with lower-track students. Though all of the teachers taught a variety of courses, they were each asked to select one class that was primarily involved in the study of literature for the purposes of the research. The student participants were enrolled in the classes studied. A smaller group of students was selected for case study interviews.

To insure variety within the sample, the participants represented three urban schools, one suburban school, and one rural school in the greater Albany area. Of the five classes studied, one was seventh grade, one was eighth, two were tenth, and one was twelfth. All of the participating students were judged by their teachers to be of average ability or lower.

Procedures

In order to examine the general patterns of discussion in these five teachers' classrooms, each teacher's class was videotaped during all of the discussions in a single instructional unit (two units involved the discussion of one text; two units addressed short stories; and one examined episodes and characters from Greek mythology). None of the units lasted more than five days. The videotapes were transcribed and later analyzed for their basic features. In order to explore teachers' and students' purposes during those discussions, each teacher and one or more students from each class was interviewed, or, in the case of one group of students, asked for a written response to a series of questions.

Interviews

The five teachers were interviewed outside of class, and while the specific questions in each interview varied depending on the text and the students being taught, all of the teachers were asked to address two basic questions: 1) what were their general goals in holding discussion? and 2) what problems did they perceive in achieving those goals? The number of interviews with each teacher varied from two to eleven depending on scheduling opportunities. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for later analysis.

One or more students from four teachers' classes were also interviewed for their perceptions of classroom discussions. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. In the fifth class, students responded in writing to questions that paralleled those asked in the interviews.

Videotaped Discussions

In an initial meeting with the researchers, the five participating teachers each decided upon the literary texts that would be the focus of discussion during the videotaping. All of the texts selected were normally taught as part of the literature curriculum in the classes studied and all of the teachers indicated that they would spend several days discussing them with their students. On the days of the taping, a video camera was positioned as unobtrusively as possible in each room and instruction proceeded as normally as possible. The teachers reported that the camera did not greatly affect their own or their students' participation in the discussions.

Three or four classes were videotaped for each teacher, sixteen classes in all. These sixteen were transcribed and analyzed. Table 1 summarizes the information about data collection.

Analysis

Interviews

The transcribed interviews with teachers and students were analyzed for perspectives on two basic questions: 1) what are the goals of classroom discussion? and 2) what problems typically affect the achievement of those goals? To answer these questions, the interviews were studied for themes that seemed common to both teachers and students and for the more specific issues raised by either group. Information from the interviews was then synthesized into a more general portrait of the perspectives offered by the participants.

Videotaped Discussions

To examine the basic features of the classroom discussions, a coding system (Marshall, 1989) was employed that distinguished two levels of organization (speaker turn and communication unit) and that analyzed each communication unit for linguistic function, knowledge base, and kind of reasoning. An overview of the system for coding the communication units is provided in the following.

Organization of Discussions

In order to mark the boundaries that shape classroom discussion, each transcribed discussion was first segmented at two levels: communication units and turns.

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection

Teacher	Grade	Interviews		Text	Observ.
		Teacher	Student		
Veronica Carter	7	3	1	"Raymond's Run"	3
Tony Carrera	10	11	1	"Law Like Love" "The Book ofthe Grotesque"	4
Jean Taggert	12	2	3	Death of a Salesman	3
Laura Peters	10	5	(written responses)	Of Mice and Men	3
Jim Vincent	8	2	1	Mythology	3

Communication Unit

The basic unit of analysis, communication units have the force of a sentence, though they may be as short as one word (e.g., "Yes" or "OK"). They represent an identifiable remark or utterance on a single topic.

Turn

The most obvious boundary in most oral discourse, a turn consists of one or more communication units spoken by a single participant who holds the floor.

Two raters independently segmented four randomly chosen transcriptions of discussions, representing about 25 percent of the data set, at both levels of organization. Exact agreement between raters was 100 percent for turns and 94 percent for communication units.

The Language of Discussions

In order to examine the linguistic patterns and intellectual content of the discussions, each communication unit was coded within one of five major categories and within one of several sub-categories that allowed a closer analysis of its features. The major categories and their respective sub-categories are described below.

I. Direct: Any remark (even when it is represented as a question) that intends to move auditors toward an action or to shift the attention of the auditors or the focus of the discussion (e.g., "Can we quiet down and get to the next point?").

II. Inform: Any statement of fact or opinion whose purpose is to represent what the speaker knows, believes, or thinks about a topic. Reading and quoting from texts are included here.

1. Nature of Remark:
   - A. Classroom logistics: Refers to the management of classroom activities (e.g, homework assignments, roll, reading completed).
   - B. Reads or quotes from text.
   - C. Instructional statements: Refers to the substantive issues under discussion.

If remarks were coded as instructional in focus, they were further analyzed for knowledge source and kind of reasoning.

1) Knowledge Source
   - a) Personal/autobiographical (information drawn from the speaker's own experience)
   - b) Text (information drawn from the text under study)
   - c) Text-in-context (information about the author of the text, the historical period in which it was written, or its genre).
   - d) General knowledge (information drawn from the media or contemporary culture that is widely available).
   - e) Previous class discussions, lectures, or readings.
   - f) Other

2) Kind of Reasoning:

a) Summary/description (statements which focus on the literal features of an experience or text.

b) Interpretation (statements which make an inference about the meaning or significance of information).

c) Evaluation (statements that focus on the quality of an experience or a text).

d) Generalization (statements that move toward theoretical speculation about the nature of characters, authors, and texts).

e) Other

III. Question: Any verbal or non-verbal gesture that invites or requires a response from an auditor.

1. Nature of Question:

A. Classroom logistics.

B. Instructional focus.

If a question was coded as instructional, it was further analyzed for the knowledge source and level of reasoning it was meant to elicit. Definitions for sub-categories are the same as those for informational statements.

1. Knowledge source

a) Personal/autobiographical

b) Text

c) Text-in-context

d) General knowledge

e) Previous class discussions/lectures/readings

f) Other

2. Kind of reasoning:

a) Summary/description

b) Interpretation

c) Evaluation

d) Generalization

e) Other

IV. Respond: Any verbal or non-verbal gesture that acknowledges, restates, evaluates, or otherwise reacts to the nature, quality, or substance of preceding remarks. Responses clearly focus on the form of substance of the preceding remark itself. Answers to questions are coded within the Inform category. A remark coded as a Response to a question would ask for a clarification or explanation of the question itself or would comment on the value of the question.

1. Nature of Response:

a) Acknowledgement (simple indication that a remark was heard)

b) Restatement (an effort to repeat a previous remark)

c) Positive evaluation (a positive comment on a remark)

d) Negative evaluation (a negative comment on a remark)

e) Request for explanation/elaboration/clarification (any remark that asks the

previous speaker to speak more clearly or at greater length)

f) Elaboration (any remark that moves beyond a simple restatement by substantively changing the original speaker's language or by offering an interpretation of what the speaker was saying)

g) Other

V. Other: Any utterance that cannot be coded in other categories.

Two raters independently coded five randomly selected transcripts, representing about 25 percent of the data set. Exact agreement between raters was 95 percent for the major categories and 86 percent for the sub-categories. A sample of coded transcript is provided in Appendix B.

Transcriptions

The videotapes were viewed several times in the course of transcription in order to make certain that each speaker's contribution was accurately represented. In a very few cases, students' remarks could not be heard in spite of repeated efforts to make them out. On these occasions, the student's turn was counted as one communication unit and was coded as Other. Because such inaudible contributions sometimes may have been longer than one unit, the length of students' turns may be very slightly under-represented in the analysis.

One full tape (from Carter's class) was dropped from the analysis because it consisted almost entirely of the teacher reading a story aloud to the class. The sixteen tapes that were analyzed represent classes where virtually all of the speakers' contributions could be accurately transcribed and where there was general agreement that a large-group discussion was being held.

Results and Discussion

Interviews

Teachers' Perspectives

In order to determine the basic purposes driving discussions in these classrooms, the interviews with teachers were examined for the goals they articulated for themselves and for the problems they found in achieving those goals.

For the most part, the teachers hoped that their classroom discussions would allow students to engage with the literature on a personal level, to think more deeply about it, to construct a meaning that made sense to them. As Jean Taggert put it:

> I really try to find out what they think. This is the interesting part, the most complicated, the most meaningful. What within the [text] affects your own life?

The centrality of students' active participation in the process of interpretation was echoed by Tony Carrera:

> I want students to be able to make [literature], both as readers and writers. I want them to be independent interpreters. If interpretation, if one level of it is going to be personal, then I want it to start there. I want it to start as being personal.
>
> I would like some individual engagement first, with the opportunity, at least for a couple of minutes, to think about, what have I got here? What am I doing? [Discussions] are a group of people deciding what they need to build, building it, and then deciding whether it's any good or not.

The specific purposes informing discussions of literature, in fact, were in large measure the same as those informing their general purposes in teaching. As Veronica Carter argued:

> I see as my purpose in the classroom to keep going a feeling that we are people, first of all, and we are educating ourselves. We're learning things together about the text, about each other, about what we think about the world, and it's more than...I'm in here educating people and our finished product is people that I have finished molding somehow. They're not going to be finished any more than I'm finished now. You don't send people out of high school knowing everything they need to know. You send them out eager to learn.

What perhaps seems most striking about these excerpts from the interviews is the articulate passion with which the teachers were able to describe their goals. Less obvious, though perhaps equally important, is the fact that these teachers seldom set for themselves the goal of leading students toward an understanding of conventional textual meaning or the appreciation of authorial intention. Their interest, rather, seemed focussed on the ways texts could be used to foster students' reflection on their lives, their peers, their communities. In this view, the understanding of literary texts may not be an end of instruction, but the means by which students are led to a richer and more fully developed understanding of themselves.

A convenient label for such goals might be "student-centered" or "reader-centered" (as opposed to "teacher-centered" or "text-centered"), but such a label would greatly simplify and thus seriously misrepresent the difficulties these teachers faced in achieving their goals. For though they hoped that their students would read and discuss texts in ways that were meaningful to them, they sought to accomplish that task with students who were not accustomed to such discussions and within an instructional context that provided little support for their efforts.

By definition, the students enrolled in the classes studied here were generally not college-bound. They had been designated as average ability or lower, possessed of problems in reading comprehension, writing ability, and various "school skills" such as attentiveness, regular attendance, and appropriate behavior in class. The teachers working with these students usually could not assume even the most basic comprehension of what had been read. Thus, though her goal is always to find out what her students think about a text, Jean Taggert suggested that she must first ask:

> Just on this literal level, did they understand what happened? After we've read it, we

> want to go back over it. Do they really know what happened? Are they confused by the flashbacks? Are they confused by the mix up of characters. Very basically, have [they] truly comprehended this work and [do they] know what happened? Then I really try to find out what they think.

The students' problems with comprehension, of course, make it difficult for Taggert to get them to read at all:

> I did have them read, and I don't know if that was a mistake. It's such a battle. You have absolutely no idea. The anger. The resistance. They have never been asked to read before out of the room. And that is the truth. They can't believe that I am expecting them to read this story by themselves....The [stories] that I know are tough, I start it and set up the characters. I get names on the board so they're not confused, and the setting, where it takes place, and I move as far as them reading aloud. I read some myself, asking some to read who are willing to do that, who are good readers. We establish what I consider a security information so that people are not so intimidated. [But] they read the two opening paragraphs and they are lost. They are not readers and they are tired. And they are annoyed that they are being asked to read at all.

Here it seems clear that Taggert's student-centered desire to help her students think personally about the text ("What within the text affects your own life?"), can be achieved only when that thinking is preceded by some rather teacher-centered strategies (reading aloud, putting names on the board, establishing the setting, providing "security information"). In her plans for a discussion of Of Mice and Men, Laura Peters made similar precautions:

> I'm going to introduce the characters of George and Lennie. I think I'm going to have them work on George to get down details of George and Lennie. The description passage I may type up and let them work in partners and let them underline concrete words and that kind of thing. [The only difficulty I see] is if they haven't read it. But even now they might be able to get through the class, the way the class is set up [with the typed description provided].

The problems that these teachers described in helping their students "through class" and to a simple comprehension of what the texts say, however, were compounded by students' attitudes toward the language and conventions of schooling itself. As Taggert put it:

> One of the interesting things I've found is that they are so afraid of arguing. They call it "arguing," "fighting." It makes some of them very uncomfortable. I call it a wonderful discussion. You say something. I counter. You come back. I counter. Document your opinion. Keep at me. [But they don't do that]. I don't think they have enough practice. How many homes allow that kind of [discussion]? Encourage it? The mere intellectual exercise of it all isn't something they value. They don't have an investment in discussion unless there is something concrete like they are going to get out of something, or they are going to get something raised.

That at least some of Taggert's students cannot perceive argument as a kind of "intellectual exercise" is a reminder, of course, that students may have difficulty with a curriculum, not only because of its content, but also because of its form. The modes of argumentation that are taken for granted in school, and in most academic discourse, may

themselves be an obstacle, Taggert suggests, to her students' participation in the literate community she represents and into which she is trying to invite them.

That literate community, though, is forged largely in schools, and while the characteristics of their students pose one challenge for teachers, the characteristics of schooling pose another that may be equally difficult to overcome. One of the problems, as Tony Carrera suggests, is that schools seem to place a greater value on right answers than on careful thinking:

> One of the things I think people have been trained to do...is come up with a fill-in-the-blank answer and that's it. It's either right or wrong, and there's no sense going any further with it because nobody cares. And I don't think anybody can read a work or live a life that way and there seems to be a lot of training that goes on in school that tells you, setting this problem, yes or no, and then write one sentence that gives yes or no and then stop. Don't worry about it, don't ever try to fashion that into a whole interpretation of the work.

The emphasis on fill-in-the-blank answers, however, by providing few occasions for students to engage in extended thought, works to undermine the efforts of teachers who may want to help students move beyond such answers. Thus Laura Peters, following the class in which students worked in groups on Steinbeck's characterization of George and Lennie, had this to say:

> It was awful. It was terrible. I was really not happy with it. I know I didn't accomplish what I wanted to accomplish. The kids didn't seem to know what it was I was asking them to do. And the kids had a problem speaking. I asked for individuals to get up and speak, to represent these groups and they had a problem with that. [And] when I tried to pull it all together it was a real disaster. [So, tomorrow] I'm going to be in charge, control more of the classroom. Maybe it will be better, they'll know what they're talking about tomorrow. But I don't know.

The problem, of course, is circular. Students are given little practice in independent discussion, and so, when they are asked to participate in a small or large group, they have limited command of the conventions and achieve limited success. Their teachers, meanwhile, frustrated at the disarray of the discussion and disappointed that their own goals have not been met, are pushed back in the very direction they were hoping to avoid. Thus, Laura Peters, having decided to be "more in charge" in her teaching of Of Mice and Men said she was happy after the second day of discussion:

> I got the kids to go in the direction I wanted to. I think the class was more teacher-directed. I felt the kids were all with me and knew what I was talking about and read what I asked them to read. And finished things the way I wanted to.

At times, in spite of the pressure to locate "right answers," and in spite of students' reluctance to enter fully into a discussion, these teachers felt success. After one such class, Veronica Carter said:

> I was exactly where I wanted to be in the classroom for almost all of that class. I felt like I was in a community of people who were interested in what I was interested in and I felt like I was taking part in a literary discussion. They said some things that were interesting to me personally as a reader that I want to use in informing my own reading

of the work. They did not act like little vessels ready to be filled with facts at all.

Given the characteristics of their students and the characteristics of schooling, however, such discussions were only rarely achieved. We will later examine how the problems faced by these teachers helped shape the nature of classroom discourse. But first we will describe the students' own perspectives on discussions of literature.

Students' Perspectives

In many respects, the students we interviewed saw the goals and problems of classroom discussions in much the same way as their teachers. Several students suggested that those goals included the opportunity for them to learn more about themselves. As Julie, a student in Tony Carrera's class, put it:

> [A discussion is] just telling our own ideas about any work, just about anything. We try to get on one topic and discuss that which will lead us to other topics. The interpretation will help you try to understand meanings about a work or a lot of times it's just to see, to learn more about yourself. Interpretation is mainly what does it because you learn about yourself in a way -- how you feel about the use of certain words, how you feel about a certain topic that the author has thought about, and if you agree or disagree with them. Cause that's what makes the world go around -- there's agreements and disagreements.

The theme of openness to students' ideas was echoed by Abbey, a student in Veronica Carter's class:

> [Carter] wants us to figure things out for ourselves. So maybe even though she's sorted some things out in her head, she's open to our ideas. And she's interested to see whether we can figure things out. She wants us to try to be able to figure things out by ourselves, even though it's not the same way she interpreted the text, she says that it's not necessarily wrong.

But if openness and the free-play of ideas are the goal of discussion, some of the students recognized that their teachers played a significant role in guiding and controlling the conversation. Tony, for example, a student in Jim Vincent's class, described discussions this way:

> We have discussions all the time. Like what did you think was most important, what do you think you learned, what did you get out of that, what did this mean, what happened with this, what happened with that, and what do you think will happen later and stuff like that.

In order to answer such questions, however, Tony needs the help of his teacher:

> He's going to tell us the story because he said the reading would be too hard. He reads the book and he puts it into his own words because he doesn't think we could understand the book.

Retelling the story for students (in this case, stories from mythology) makes it possible for students to begin the interpretive process embodied in Vincent's questions ("What do you think you learned? What do you think will happen later?"). But the teacher here is clearly making an enormous effort to support that process, providing the kind of "security information" that Laura Peters mentioned. The problem, of course, becomes how to provide such security without undermining the student-centered interpretive practice that it is meant to serve. There seems to be little question that the students in these classes needed support for their efforts. Their alienation from school, and from the orderly, middle-class values represented by school, is often profound. David, a student in Jean Taggert's 12th-grade class, put it this way:

> A lot of [teachers] think they know everything. They tell people, "Well, when you get out in the real world..." They really don't know nothing about the real world. They try to tell us, "When you get out there, go to work and be there on time." You know, all kind of stuff like that. When kids go out and do that, they are going to get fucked over, you know. Teachers here are trying to have kids go by the rules and play everything straight. When you go out, everything isn't straight, man. It's a dog-eat-dog world. That's the way I look at it. That's how things have been for me.

David feels separated, though, not just from the world of school, but also from the people in school who make the rules and seem to succeed:

> Like we got sides in this school. The scumbags and the higher people. People look at you, just cause you got a leather jacket or you got your head shaved or you got long hair, got Doc Martin boots or holes in your pants, people look at you like you're scumbags. You ain't got no polo shirt on, you know? Gold around your neck, driving a BMW to school. You're garbage.

David's representation of his life, both in and out of school, perhaps needs little commentary. But given that representation, we can already see the difficulties his teacher would face in sustaining a discussion about literature that would not only include him, but would seek out and support his efforts to connect the literature to what he knows. For what he knows is different from what other, more academically successful students might know -- and David realizes how different that knowledge is:

> Cause we have a totally different life, the way we live. We just don't have a life where we wake up in the morning, go to school, do our school work and then go home, do our homework and then we go to bed or eat dinner with our Mommy and Daddy, you know. We don't have a life like that.

Beginning with an understanding of the kind of life David and his peers do have, though, the teachers we studied attempted to discuss literature in way that would help their students see themselves more clearly. We will turn now to an examination of how those discussions proceeded.

The Structure of Discussions

Length and Organization

The discussions we analyzed varied widely in their overall length (as measured by the number of utterances spoken by participants), in the number of turns taken by participants, and in the average length of the turns taken by teachers and students. The relevant data are summarized in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

The length of the discussions ranged from a low of 92 communication units (in Laura Peters' first class) to a high of 660 units (in Jean Taggert's second class) for an average of about 436 units per class across teachers. The number of utterances made by participants during any one class depended on several factors, including the pace of delivery, the amount of time allowed between speaker turns, and the amount of time teachers wished to devote to large group discussion on any given day. In the period in which only 92 units were transcribed and analyzed, for example, Laura Peters led a large group discussion for about ten minutes and then broke the class into small groups. At the end of the period, she again brought the class together for large-group discussion. Only those remarks made during the large-group discussions were included in the analysis.

More interesting than the overall quantity of utterances made during discussions, however, were the variations across teachers in the number of speaker turns. As Table 3 suggests, within any one class, the turns were distributed fairly evenly among teachers and students, even though the number of turns taken ranged widely across those classes. Thus Jim Vincent and his students each averaged about 22 turns per discussion, while Jean Taggert averaged over 70 and her students just over 77. Such patterns suggest the stability of turn-taking conventions that have been consistently documented in studies of classroom discourse (Mehan, 1979; Cazden, 1988; Marshall, 1989) -- conventions which seem to require, in almost every case, that the floor to be returned to the teacher after each student turn. This pattern seems to remain in place no matter how few or how many conversational turns teachers take in a discussion.

Equally stable in this context are the conventions governing the relative length of teacher and student turns. As Table 4 indicates, teachers turns were always longer than their students' contributions, ranging from a low of 4 units per turn (Carrera) to a high of over 20 (Vincent) for an average of 6.5 units per turn. The length of students' turns, meanwhile, varied little, and averaged just under 2 units per turn.

We can see an example of these patterns in an excerpt from Veronica Carter's class discussion of "Raymond's Run." At this point, Carter is asking her students to focus on the title character, Raymond, who does not seem as central to the story as another character, Squeaky.

Student: I think it, a book called "Raymond's Run" should have talked about him more than just running along with the breathing exercises.

Teacher: Cornell says it should have been "Squeaky's Run" not "Raymond's Run." How many people, just raise your hand, do you believe that it should be "Sqeaky's Run" instead of "Raymond's Run."

Table 2

Number of Units Per Class by Teacher

	Class 1	2	3	4	Total	Mean	(SD)
Teacher							
Carter	336	632	409		1373	459.0	(125.9)
Carrera	169	240	554	335	1298	324.5	(145.0)
Taggert	524	660	620		1804	601.3	(57.1)
Peters	92	506	487		1095	365.0	(190.8)
Vincent	549	397	468		1414	471.3	(62.1)
					6984	436.7	(161.2)

Table 3

Mean Number of Turns by Speaker

	Teacher	Student
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Teacher		
Carter (n=416)	68.3 (59.4)	70.3 (39.7)
Carrera (n=418)	46.7 (42.1)	57.7 (33.4)
Taggert (n=444)	70.7 (63.9)	77.3 (48.6)
Peters (n=278)	47.0 (40.0)	45.7 (22.7)
Vincent (n=131)	22.0 (11.3)	21.7 (11.0)
TOTAL (n=1687)	56.5 (19.8)	61.3 (21.9)

Table 4

Mean Length of Turns by Speaker

	Teacher	Student
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Teacher		
Carter (n=416)	5.1 (5.7)	1.6 (0.9)
Carrera (n=418)	4.0 (6.5)	2.3 (1.8)
Taggert (n=444)	6.3 (6.1)	2.0 (1.0)
Peters (n=278)	6.4 (4.8)	1.4 (1.2)
Vincent (n=131)	20.4 (16.8)	1.2 (1.0)
TOTAL (n=1687)	6.5 (6.7)	1.7 (0.4)

Student: He was running too, though.

Teacher: Yeah, I think you have a point. Raise your hand if you think there's something wrong here with the title.

Student: It is.

Student: Cause you know what. The story, it didn't really tell about her.

Teacher: Why do you think then -- there has to be a reason.

Student: The ending was about her but the whole story wasn't about her.

Teacher: Nashe, what were you going to say? Did the writer make a mistake by calling it "Raymond's Run" instead of "Squeaky's Run?" I guess that's what we are all asking. Wait, everybody stop. OK, now Nashe. Are you just reiterating, repeating again that it should be "Squeaky's Run."

Student: Yep.

Teacher: OK, Shelly.

Student: It was already in the story, going through the story there wasn't that much description of Raymond. The only description I mostly heard about was that he had a pumpkin head and...because everybody thought he had a real big head.

Teacher: And he did have a big head, she said. What's wrong with him?

Students (more than one): Retarded. He had a problem or something.

Teacher: Well, Squeaky says he's got a big head. She agrees with everybody. He does have a pumpkin head. What else does he do in the story? What does she tell you in the very first part? She says to you, second paragraph, look at the second paragraph. Underline the second paragraph where it says, "Sometimes I slip...."

We will be looking shortly at the different kinds of knowledge and reasoning that teachers and students employed in their turns, but the excerpt from Carter's class may suggest the strong quantitative differences in those turns. Carter speaks more frequently than any individual speaker; in every case except one, the floor is returned to her after a student turn. Just as important, her turns are longer than those of her students. The longest student contribution here consists of only two sentences, while Carter's run as high as seven. At times, she repeats the gist of what a student has said previously; at others, she uses her turn to elaborate upon or recast what the student has said in order to ask a follow-up question. We will turn now to examine more specifically the language and content of the participants' contributions to the discussions.

The Language of Discussions

General Patterns

In order to determine the basic linguistic patterns of the discussions, each communication unit was coded within one of four major categories: Direct, Inform, Question, and Respond. A fifth category, Other, included all remarks that could not be coded within the major categories. Table 5 summarizes these data for teachers and students.

In general, there were strong differences in the kinds of remarks made by students and teachers during the discussions. Neither group frequently made directive statements (2.1 percent for teachers; less than 1 percent for students), but in the other categories distinctive patterns emerged. Students were most likely to make informative statements: these accounted, on average, for over 76 percent of their remarks. Teachers, on the other hand, made informative remarks about 64 percent of the time. Teachers were twice as likely as their students to ask questions (22.5 percent for teachers; 11.7 percent for students) and about twice as likely to respond to a previous contribution (11.1 percent for teachers; 4.5 percent for students). Less than one percent of the teachers' contributions were coded as Other; the unfortunately high proportion of students' remarks coded as Other (6.9 percent) was due largely to the difficulty in transcribing student turns in Vincent's class (about 34 percent could not be heard clearly).

These patterns generally held across teachers, although there was variation within categories. All of the teachers informed more than they questioned, and questioned more than they responded. Still, the average percent of informative statements made by teachers ranged from around 48 percent (Carter) to about 93 percent (Vincent), while the average percent of questions ranged from just over 4 percent (Vincent) to over 30 percent (Peters). The variation in students' remarks was comparable, ranging from a low of 50 percent to a high of almost 90 percent in the informative category, and from a low of just under 3 percent to a high of over 20 percent in the question category. In every class, teachers responded to previous remarks far more frequently than their students, though even here there was variation (Carrera responded to remarks almost 17 percent of the time; Vincent just 1 percent).

On average, then, both teachers and students were most likely to make informative statements when they held the floor. Teachers, however, were also likely to make other kinds of remarks, while students' contributions varied little in purpose. We can see these patterns from a slightly different angle by examining the proportions of purposes served within speakers' turns. Table 6 summarizes the relevant data.

In three of the teachers' classes (Carter, Carrera, and Peters), teachers used their turn to inform, question, and respond in about equal measure; in a way, this pattern suggests the basic three-part structure for teacher turns described in an earlier study of classroom discourse about literature (Marshall, 1989). But in two of the classes (Taggert and Vincent), the teachers used their turns primarily to inform (over 50 percent for Taggert; almost 90 percent for Vincent), asking questions and responding to previous contributions less frequently. Students' turns were dominated by an informative purpose. Over 70 percent of their remarks within turns were informative, with the remainder about equally divided between the Question (11.3 percent) and Other (13.3 percent) categories.

Table 5

General Discourse Function
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Direct	Inform	Question	Respond	Other
Carter						
Teacher	1041	6.6	48.5	28.1	16.0	0.7
Student	336	0.0	77.1	7.1	5.4	10.4
Carrera						
Teacher	757	1.5	57.5	24.4	16.6	0.0
Student	541	0.0	79.9	10.2	8.7	1.3
Taggert						
Teacher	1341	1.0	61.1	29.5	8.4	0.1
Student	463	1.1	70.6	20.1	1 1	7.1
Peters						
Teacher	899	1.8	47.7	30.8	19.7	0.0
Student	196	0.0	88.8	2.6	1.5	7.1
Vincent						
Teacher	1342	0.4	93.1	4.4	1.0	1.0
Student	68	0.0	50.0	16.2	0.0	33.8
Average						
Teacher	1076	2.1	63.9	22.5	11.1	0.3
Student	32	0.0	76.4	11.7	4.5	6.9

Table 6

Mean Percent of Discourse Functions Within Turns

Mean Percent (SD)

	Direct		Inform		Question		Respond		Other	
	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student
Teacher										
Carter	5.1	0.0	37.0	75.1	30.3	6.3	26.9	7.0	0.6	11.6
(n=1373)	(17.9)	(0.0)	(33.9)	(39.2)	(31.3)	(20.9)	(33.2)	(24.2)	(3.9)	(29.1)
Carrera	1.2	0.0	35.9	77.6	33.4	9.7	29.4	10.8	0.0	1.9
(n=1298)	(7.3)	(0.0)	(38.0)	(35.7)	(37.5)	(24.4)	(37.3)	(25.8)	(0.0)	(12.3)
Taggert	1.5	0.1	51.1	70.8	36.4	18.9	10.8	1.0	0.1	8.6
(n=1804)	(10.2)	(5.0)	(34.3)	(36.7)	(32.5)	(31.5)	(19.8)	(6.8)	(1.0)	(24.2)
Peters	1.2	0.0	34.6	87.7	33.5	1.8	30.6	1.5	0.0	8.9
(n=1095)	(5.9)	(0.0)	(27.8)	(31.7)	(22.9)	(12.4)	(29.8)	(12.0)	(0.0)	(27.7)
Vincent	0.4	0.0	87.3	49.5	9.0	15.3	2.4	0.0	0.8	35.2
(n=1414)	(1.2)	(0.0)	(11.6)	(36.7)	(10.6)	(23.5)	(4.1)	(0.0)	(1.7)	(31.5)
TOTAL	1.8	0.0	50.2	71.2	28.6	11.3	18.8	3.9	0.2	13.3
(n=6984)	(1.6)	(0.0)	(20.0)	(12.6)	(9.9)	(6.1)	(11.3)	(4.1)	(0.3)	(11.4)

We can see an example of these patterns in two examples from the discussions. The first is from Laura Peter's second class on Of Mice and Men.

Teacher: First of all, the place where the opening scene takes place. What kind of place is it? What is it? Michelle?

Student: A swamp?

Teacher: Actually, it's a spot in the woods. I don't know if it's a swamp. It's a pool in the woods. Actually it's not a swamp. Why isn't it a swamp?

Student: The water's clean.

Teacher: Right, and they talk about boys coming to swim there. Actually it's probably a clearing in the woods. And as we talked about yesterday, it's a place where many people have come in the past. Who remembers the details about that? How do we know a lot of people have enjoyed this spot? Stephanie?

Student: There's ashes from fires, outlines of people sitting.

Teacher: OK. Frequent fires. Dan?

Student: There's a path there.

Teacher: There is a path there and the path is made by whom?

Student: Boys?

Teacher: Many boys coming there to swim. So it's a clearing in the woods, but it's a very pleasant place. It's a place where boys have come to swim. And also a lot of drifters have come too. As we read the opening description, can anyone tell me the mood? Mood is the feeling you get as a reader when you are reading something. What kind of mood do you get here? What kind of mood or feelings do you get from these opening descriptions?

This excerpt exemplifies the three-part structure of teachers' turns (Respond, Inform, Question) found in three of the classes studied. In her third turn, for instance, Peters first responds ("Right, and they talk about boys coming to swim there"), then informs ("it's a place where many people have come in the past"), and finally asks a question ("Who remembers the details about that?"). The excerpt also exemplifies the preponderance of informative statements made by students when they held the floor. In general, the student's remarks are brief, consisting of no more than a few words, sometimes gathered in incomplete sentences ("A swamp;" "Boys"). Such contributions make sense only if they are understood within the context provided by Peters, who repeats or elaborates upon what the student has said ("OK, frequent fires;" "Many boys coming to swim there") before going on to provide further information or to ask further questions ("What kind of mood do you get here?").

Not all of the teachers, however, used their turns to accomplish such a three-fold purpose. In the following excerpt from Jim Vincent's discussion of mythology, for example, we can see the dominance of informational statements in the teacher's turns. Vincent and his student are discussing Priam, the important character from Greek legend.

Teacher: By now he was getting old by Trojan standards, in his late twenties. But he was sick. His wife who had starting bearing children at a very early age was emotionally upset and finally, after a number of years of non-marriage ... that's the term you want to put down because they weren't really married. Remember, they were brother and sister. You can't understand. You say, "My God, I am marrying my sister? I can't stand her." But through the years they had developed a love for each other. What was her big emotional pain? What did she turn away from her husband? What did she think she had done?

Student: She thought by not being pregnant...(inaudible)

Teacher: What did she feel?

Student: That she wasn't any use to him.

Teacher: Right, that she was no value to him. That she didn't mean anything to him. Whether it is right or its wrong -- it is true. A woman was married to provide children. That's all she had to do. And he felt the need one time. He looked at the Gods and said, "Why do you curse me? What did I do to you to cause me to go through this emotional pain?" Now remember, one day he is standing outside the little room for his wife to deliver. He is saying I am the most powerful guy in the world, one of the most powerful guys in the world. How come I can't go in there and have it my own way?

We may want to recall here that it was about Vincent's class that a student observed: "He's going to tell us the story because he said the reading would be too hard. He reads the book and he puts it into his own words because he doesn't think we could understand the book." Vincent's efforts to retell -- even to dramatize -- events from Greek legend undoubtedly proceeded from a feeling that his students would remember and understand those events more fully if they were represented in an informal, vernacular language.

But those self-conscious efforts to retell, to describe, to inform seem less a rejection of the discussion strategies employed by the other teachers than an extension of them. Vincent clearly provides more descriptive context for his questions than do the other teachers, but he continues to ask questions (9 percent of the time within turns). And though the other teachers ask questions and respond to students' contributions more frequently than Vincent, the majority of their remarks remain informative in function. It seems clear, in other words, that though these teachers were leading discussions, they were discussions in which teachers provided a good deal of the information to be addressed. We will look more closely now at the nature of that information.

Informative Statements

To analyze the kinds of information students and teachers drew upon in discussions, each informative statement was first coded for its focus: classroom logistics, reading or quoting from text, or instructional. Statements categorized as instructional were further analyzed for knowledge source and kind of reasoning. Table 7 summarizes the data on the basic focus of the informative remarks made in the discussions.

In general, both teachers and students focused most frequently on instructional issues in their statements (74.7 percent for teachers; 92.5 percent for students), and least frequently on reading or quoting from the text (around 1 percent for teachers; just over 2 percent for students). There were, however, some interesting variations across teachers. Tony Carrera addressed instructional issues about 37 percent of the time, while focussing on classroom logistics over 62 percent; Jim Vincent, on the other hand, addressed instructional issues over 94 percent of the time and classroom logistics around 5 percent. Again, we may want to recall that it was in Vincent's class that the teacher averaged exceptionally long turns (22 units per turn) and that those turns were largely informative in function (87.3 percent). Structuring discussions as Vincent did may have diminished the need to orchestrate a large number of classroom maneuvers.

There was less variation when we examined the kinds of knowledge students and teachers drew upon in making their informative statements. As Table 8 indicates, almost all of the statements made by both groups drew upon textual knowledge. (78.4 percent for teachers; 88.9 percent for students). Neither group frequently drew upon personal or autobiographical knowledge (3 percent for teachers; just under 2 percent for students). Teachers were slightly more likely than their students to refer to the biography of an author or to the genre of a text (3.3 percent for teachers; 1.1 percent for students) and slightly more likely to refer to previous instruction (6.2 percent for teachers; 2.3 percent for students). Students, on the other hand, were slightly more likely to make statements that drew upon general knowledge (9.3 percent for students; 5.9 percent for teachers).

If textual knowledge was predominant in the teachers' and students' statements, there was a corresponding predominance of summary and interpretation in their remarks. As Table 9 suggests, teachers more frequently summarized (about 65 percent) than interpreted (31 percent) the material under discussion, but together these two kinds of reasoning characterized over 96 percent of the teachers' remarks. Students, on the other hand, more frequently offered interpretations (about 61 percent) than summaries (about 25 percent); these two kinds of reasoning, however, remained primary, characterizing about 86 percent of the students' statements. Seldom did either group evaluate or generalize (although students were slightly more likely to do the latter). Less than 5 percent of either group's statements were coded as Other.

The examination of knowledge source and kinds of reasoning provides another perspective on the relative contributions of teachers and students to the discussions we observed. Teachers most often offered descriptive remarks when they spoke, drawing upon their knowledge of the text. Students, on the other hand, most often offered interpretive statements, summarizing or describing material from the text much less frequently than their teachers. We will see some of the reasons for these patterns in the analyses of the questions that teachers and students asked in the discussions.

Table 7

Nature of Information
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Logistics	Read	Instructional Focus
Carter				
Teacher	505	43.6	4.0	52.5
Student	259	4.2	5.8	90.0
Carrera				
Teacher	435	62.1	0.5	37.5
Student	432	2.8	1.4	95.8
Taggert				
Teacher	820	27.0	0.5	72.6
Student	327	12.5	0.0	87.5
Peters				
Teacher	429	11.9	2.3	85.8
Student	174	0.6	2.9	96.6
Vincent				
Teacher	1250	5.7	0.0	94.3
Student	34	2.9	0.0	97.1
Average				
Teacher	687.8	24.3	1.1	74.7
Student	245.2	5.4	2.1	92.5

Table 8

Knowledge Source for Informative Statements
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Personal	Text	Context	General	Prior Instr.	Other
Carter							
Teacher	265	6.4	55.1	.5	15.5	10.6	4.9
Student	233	5.6	78.5	0.9	8.6	2.6	3.9
Carrera							
Teacher	163	5.5	59.5	8.0	6.7	4.3	16.0
Student	413	1.7	77.0	1.5	12.3	0.5	7.0
Taggert							
Teacher	595	5.0	85.2	0.2	6.6	0.7	2.3
Student	286	0.7	85.0	0.0	8.4	1.7	4.2
Peters							
Teacher	368	1.4	82.6	1.6	10.3	3.3	0.8
Student	168	0.0	93.5	0.6	3.0	2.4	0.6
Vincent							
Teacher	1179	1.4	81.6	3.8	3.6	9.2	0.3
Student	33	0.0	48.5	9.1	15.2	27.3	0.0
Average							
Teacher	514.0	3.0	78.4	3.3	5.9	6.2	2.3
Student	226.6	1.9	80.9	1.1	9.3	2.3	4.5

Table 9

Kinds of Reasoning for Informative Statements
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Summary	Inter-pretation	Evaluation	General-ization	Other
Carter						
Teacher	265	51.7	39.6	0.4	3.4	4.9
Student	233	14.6	76.4	1.3	3.9	3.9
Carrera						
Teacher	162	45.7	23.5	0.0	14.8	16.0
Student	412	12.1	59.0	0.0	22.1	6.8
Taggert						
Teacher	595	32.1	65.7	0.0	0.0	2.2
Student	286	22.7	73.1	0.0	22.1	6.8
Peters						
Teacher	368	70.7	26.1	0.5	1.9	0.8
Student	168	70.2	27.4	0.6	1.2	0.6
Vincent						
Teacher	1179	85.5	14.2	0.0	0.1	0.3
Student	33	42.4	57.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average						
Teacher	513.8	65.5	31.0	0.2	1.6	2.3
Student	226.4	24.8	61.4	0.3	9.1	4.4

Questions

To examine the kinds of questions posed by teachers and students during the discussions, each question was first coded for focus: classroom logistics or instructional. Those questions categorized as instructional were further analyzed for sources of knowledge and kinds of reasoning elicited. Table 10 summarizes the data for the focus of questions.

Not surprisingly, the majority of questions asked by both teachers and students were instructional in focus (over 76 percent for teachers; just under 62 percent for students). Students were more likely than their teachers to ask questions about matters of classroom logistics, such as homework (over 38 percent for students; under 25 percent for teachers).

Results from the analysis of instructional questions parallel those from the analysis of instructional statements. As Table 11 suggests, both teachers and students were most likely to pose questions that addressed that text under study (just over 80 percent for teachers; 81 percent for students). They were far less likely to ask questions that elicited general knowledge (8.5 percent for teachers; 10.3 percent for students) and very unlikely to ask for personal or autobiographical knowledge, for knowledge of biography or genre, or for knowledge of previous instruction.

As indicated in Table 12, the kinds of reasoning elicited by participants' questions were largely summary and interpretation, again paralleling the analysis of instructional statements. Some 28.4 percent of the teachers' questions asked for summary or description, while 26.1 percent of the students' questions elicited such information. Meanwhile, 64.3 percent of the teachers' questions and 66.4 percent of the students' questions asked for interpretation. Taken together, these two kinds of questions -- summary and interpretation -- accounted for over 80 percent of all the questions posed during the discussions we observed. On average, both teachers and students most often asked questions eliciting interpretations. The only exception to this was in Laura Peters' class, where almost 70 percent of the teachers' questions asked for a summary or description of the material under study.

General Patterns of Statements and Questions

Now that we have examined the kinds of statements made and questions posed by participants in the discussions, we can look more closely at how those statements and questions worked together to weave a distinctive pattern of classroom discourse. Table 13 presents the relevant data.

Perhaps the clearest trend here is that the pattern of students' informative statements parallels almost exactly the pattern of teachers' questions; in fact, there is no more than a 5 percentage point difference in any category. Thus, in the analysis of knowledge source, 80.1 percent of the teachers' questions focussed on the text, and 80.9 percent of the students' statements addressed the text. And in the analysis of reasoning, 64.3 percent of the teachers' questions asked for interpretation and 61.4 percent of the students' remarks provided it. While such averages, of course, mask variation within the classrooms, and while these findings do not indicate that teachers' questions completely controlled the nature of students' remarks, the

Table 10

Focus of Questions
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Logistics	Instruction
Carter			
Teacher	293	13.0	87.0
Student	24	50.0	50.0
Carrera			
Teacher	185	33.0	67.0
Student	55	27.3	72.7
Taggert			
Teacher	395	23.8	76.2
Student	93	45.2	54.8
Peters			
Teacher	277	32.9	67.1
Student	5	0.0	100.0
Vincent			
Teacher	59	3.4	96.6
Student	11	27.3	72.7
Average			
Teacher	241.8	23.6	76.3
Student	37.6	38.3	61.7

Table 11

Knowledge Source for Instructional Questions
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Personal	Text	Context	General	Prior Instr.	Other
Carter							
Teacher	254	3.9	71.3	3.1	12.2	2.8	6.7
Student	12	8.3	66.7	8.3	16.7	0.0	0.0
Carrera							
Teacher	124	5.6	82.3	0.0	9.7	0.0	2.4
Student	40	0.0	72.5	5.0	15.0	0.0	7.5
Taggert							
Teacher	300	1.7	87.7	0.0	8.0	0.7	2.0
Student	51	0.0	96.1	0.0	3.9	0.0	0.0
Peters							
Teacher	186	0.0	93.0	0.0	3.8	2.7	0.5
Student	5	0.0	80.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Vincent							
Teacher	57	1.8	45.6	0.0	7.0	43.9	1.8
Student	8	0.0	50.0	25.0	12.5	12.5	0.0
Average							
Teacher	184.2	2.5	80.1	0.9	8.5	4.3	3.0
Student	23.2	0.9	81.0	4.3	10.3	0.9	2.6

Table 12

Kinds of Reasoning for Instructional Questions
Percent of Units by Speaker

Classroom	n of units	Summary	Inter-pretation	Evaluation	General-ization	Other
Carter						
Teacher	254	18.1	70.1	0.0	5.1	6.7
Student	12	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Carrera						
Teacher	124	21.0	57.3	0.0	19.4	2.4
Student	40	7.5	70.0	0.0	15.0	7.5
Taggert						
Teacher	300	13.3	84.7	0.0	0.0	2.0
Student	51	27.4	70.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Peters						
Teacher	186	69.9	28.5	0.0	1.1	0.5
Student	5	60.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Vincent						
Teacher	57	35.1	63.2	0.0	0.0	1.8
Student	8	37.5	62.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average						
Teacher	184.2	28.4	64.3	0.0	4.2	3.0
Student	23.2	26.1	66.4	0.0	5.1	2.6

Table 13

Comparison of Knowledge Source and Kind of Reasoning
for Teachers' and Students' Statements and Questions

Percent

	Informative Statements		Questions	
	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Student
Knowledge Source				
Personal	3.0	1.9	2.5	0.9
Text	78.4	80.9	80.1	81.0
Context	3.3	1.1	0.9	4.3
General	5.9	9.3	8.5	10.3
Kind of Reasoning				
Summary	65.5	24.8	28.4	26.1
Interpretation	31.0	61.4	64.3	66.4
Evaluation	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Generalization	1.6	9.1	4.2	5.1

general pattern seems clear: students' statements were largely reflective of the kinds of questions their teachers were asking. The teachers questions established the context into which students' remarks were to be woven, defining the kinds of knowledge to be drawn upon and the kinds of reasoning to be used.

Such findings may not be surprising given even a cursory knowledge of how classroom discussions usually unfold, but another pattern in the data suggests more specifically how teachers established a context for their students' remarks. When we contrast teachers' informative statements with their questions, we find that though they made statements that summarized or described over 65 percent of the time, they asked for summaries or descriptions only about 28 percent of the time. And though teachers asked for interpretations over 64 percent of the time, they made interpretative statements only about 31 percent of the time. In other words, the general pattern seems to be one of teachers using their turns to establish a descriptive background, summarizing (or, in Vincent's case, retelling and dramatizing) portions of the text before asking an interpretive question. Students, in their turns, most often made an interpretive statement, usually in answer to the question asked.

We can perhaps see these patterns more clearly by examining an excerpt from one of Jean Taggert's discussions of Death of a Salesman. Taggert has just asked about Willy Loman's dream.

Student: He has a dream for Biff to be great.

Teacher: To be great. To be a big star. To do something wonderful. What was Willy's dream for himself?....

Student: Don't he want to get a raise from work or something, pay the bills?

Teacher: That's what he...

Student: Don't he want to limit him to where he goes?

Teacher: That's what he wants now at sixty. He's driving off the road. He's in terrible trouble. But at sixty, these were his problems. What were his dreams? What was his goal?

Student: To go with his brother?

Student: To make it big. To make it out of the jungle. That's what it says.

Teacher: That's what Ben did. Ben made it out of the jungle. And, you know, you just picked up on a metaphor: the jungle of life. Not that you have to literally go to the jungle, but all of life is a kind of jungle that you have to fight your way out of in order to succeed or make it big. Now he wants, Willy wants, to make it big. What else did he want? You can tell by his behavior. What was so important to him for his boys?

Student: To be better than everyone else.

Teacher: Yeah. What's the word that's used over and over again?

Student: Popular.

Teacher: To be popular. To be well-liked. Popular.

Student: Now is that for him or for his kids?

Teacher: Well, I think he wanted it for himself, to be a salesman. Don't you? Or do you think it's just for Biff?

Student: No, I think...

Student: Well, if they knew his kids, they would know him too.

Teacher: That's one of the issues we have with our children. Sometimes the pressure we put on them to make it big is so that we get...

Student: But I thought he was...

Student: But he wasn't when he dies. Nobody was there. Nobody remembers him.

Teacher: This was his dream. It's called the American Dream. Now this is in the 30's that we're talking about. Do you think the American Dream to make it big, which I think is equivalent with rich, to be well-liked, to be popular...What is also part of that? Be noticed for what you do in life? Is that still a dream that we have as people?

Taggert asks questions and makes statements in about equal measure here, but it is the nature of those statements and those questions that seems most distinctive. In general, the statements she makes are descriptive of the text or of the world outside of the text. Thus, she says about Willy that at sixty, "He's driving off the road. He's in terrible trouble"; about Willy's brother that "Ben made it out of the jungle;" about Biff, that Willy "wants him to make it big." She points out a metaphor ("the jungle of life") and defines one version of the American dream ("which I think is equivalent with rich, to be well-liked to be popular"). She uses her turns, in part then, to set the stage for the largely interpretive questions that she asks: "What was his goal?" "What was so important to him for his boys?" "Do you think it's just for Biff?" The students statements, meanwhile, are woven into the context Taggert provides. They are largely answers to her questions ("To go with his brother." "To be better than everyone else"). Only once does a student ask a question ("Now is that for him or his kids"), and Taggert quickly answers it ("Well, I think he wanted it for himself") before turning it back to the student ("Or do you think it's just for Biff?").

Teachers did more in their turns, however, than provide information and ask questions. At least part of the time they were responding to the contributions of their students. We will turn now to the analysis of those responses.

Responses

Students' responses were so few in number (less than 5 percent of the whole across teachers) that they were not analyzed further. Teachers' responses were coded within seven categories. Table 14 presents the relevant findings.

As in a previous study of literature discussions (Marshall, 1989), the teachers here evaluated students' contributions less frequently than might be expected, given the body of research on classroom discourse (e.g., Mehan, 1979; Cazden, 1987). The teachers we observed made positive evaluations of their students' remarks just under 22 percent of the time, and negative evaluations less than 3 percent of the time.

More typical of discussions we studied was an effort on the part of the teacher to restate what a student had said (45.5 percent) -- a restatement that was often followed by a request for explanation (12.4 percent) or an attempt to elaborate upon what the student had said (10.1 percent). Taken together, these three forms of response -- restatement, elaboration, request for explanation -- comprise 68 percent of the teachers' responses; and, again taken together, seem to represent an effort to shape individual student contributions into a coherent, evolving whole. We can see such an effort more clearly by examining the kinds of responses made by Laura Peters when leading a discussion of Of Mice and Men. The class is working at a description of the scenery Steinbeck includes at the beginning of the book.

Teacher: How does he describe the foothills? What adjectives does he use?

Student: Golden?

Teacher: He talks about the golden foothills. Now, tell me, what does than mean? How can foothills be golden?

Student: The sun is setting and the light is reflecting off the trees.

Teacher: The sun was setting and the light is reflecting off the tress. We know that the sun is setting because on the next page we're told it's getting toward evening. And the sun's kind of shining off in the distance making those foothills look golden. Now how about the valley side. The side with the trees. What does he say about the trees? What type of trees are they and how do they look?

Student: They're willows and they're fresh with green and spring.

Teacher: OK, he talks about the valley side being lined with willows. With willow trees. And he says they're fresh and green with every spring. And then he says something about the sycamore trees which are also on this one side of the water. Where the trees are. You probably didn't understand this line. But can anybody tell me what the line is?

Student: "With mottled white..."

Table 14

Nature of Teacher Response
Percent of Units

Teacher	n of units	Acknow-ledge	Re-state	Pos.	Neg.	Ask for Explan.	Elabor-ation	Other
Carter	167	6.6	43.2	28.1	4.8	10.8	6.6	0.0
Carrera	126	7.1	50.0	7.9	0.8	30.2	4.0	0.0
Taggert	112	1.8	63.4	27.7	0.0	1.8	5.4	0.0
Peters	177	11.9	36.7	18.6	2.3	9.0	21.5	0.0
Vincent	14	0.0	42.9	50.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
AVERAGE	119.2	7.2	45.5	21.4	2.4	12.4	10.1	0.0

Teacher: The line is actually "the sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs." And branches. OK. The questions is what does that mean? It happens to be a very specific line about what the trees are like but if you don't have a couple of vocabulary words you might have trouble. "The sycamore trees with mottled limbs." Does anyone know what the word "mottled" means?

Student: Spotted, colored, more than one color.

Teacher: Exactly. More than one color. And then they are "recumbent." Anybody know "recumbent?"

Student: Reclining?

Teacher: Exactly. I saw an ad over the weekend for a recumbent exercise bike. And I think you can sort of sit back and lie back and pedal. I don't know if it's more relaxing or you work harder. I don't know what the details are. But the word "recumbent" means "reclining, resting."

In each of her turns here, Peters repeats or elaborates upon a student's contribution as a transition to another question ("He talks about the golden foothills. Now tell me, what does that mean?") or to a another piece of information ("The sun was setting....We know the sun is setting because on the next page we're told it's getting towards evening. And the sun's kind of shining off in the distance...."). The teacher's responses, in other words serve to acknowledge a student's remark while at the same time using it as a point of departure for further exposition. Though students' individual contributions are sometimes brief, consisting only of one or more words ("Golden;" "Spotted, colored, more than one color"), they are contextualized by the questions that come before and the responses that come after, and are thereby woven into a discourse that the teacher is actively shaping.

General Discussion

The research reported here had two general purposes: 1) to examine the goals and difficulties articulated by teachers and students in lower-track classrooms when they were asked to describe discussions of literature; and 2) to examine the nature of those discussions as they unfolded, more specifically analyzing the sources of knowledge and the kinds of reasoning that participants drew upon and elicited when talking about literature in school.

One of several patterns which emerged from the study was that the teachers we studied set largely consistent goals for themselves and for their students. In general, they wanted students to interact with the literature on a personal level, to find a way to connect the literature to their own histories and their own lives. Thus Jean Taggert wants to ask her students "What within the [text] affects your own life?" and Tony Carrera defines discussions as "A group of people deciding what they need to build, building it, and then deciding whether it's any good or not." In this view, the locus of control in both reading and discussion is decidedly within the students themselves. They are encouraged to decide what the text means to them, and they are encouraged further to find a language that will represent that meaning to the

group. The fact that their students were unlikely to go on to college meant that these teachers felt a special responsibility to begin a process of reading and learning that might carry those students well beyond their school years. As Veronica Carter put it, "They're not going to be finished any more than I'm finished now. You don't send people out of high school knowing everything they need to know. You send them out eager to learn."

But, the teachers reminded us, these goals were often difficult to achieve precisely because their students were so seldom "eager to learn." Designated "lower-track," "below average," "terminal," those students' school lives had been marked by failure, if not neglect, and so they were often unwilling to accept the kinds of invitations that their teachers were extending. "It's such a battle," Jean Taggert reports. "The anger. The resistance.....They can't believe that I am asking them to read this story by themselves." To get over that anger, that resistance, the teachers suggested that they often had to provide a base line of "security" -- "so that people are not so intimidated." In frustration over the failure of a lesson she saw as student-centered, Laura Peters said, "[Tomorrow] I'm going to be in charge, control more of the classroom." In spite of their efforts, then, to free students from what Tony Carrera called "the fill-in-the-blank answer," the teachers sometimes felt that they had to return to such strategies if any progress was to be made at all.

Our interviews with the students reinforced the teachers' perspectives on the purposes that drove the discussions and on the problems those discussions presented. On the one hand, Abbey could report that Carter wanted her students "to figure things out for [them]selves....She's open to our ideas....Even though it's not the same way she interpreted the text, she say that it's not necessarily wrong." But on the other hand, Tony reports that his teacher, Jim Vincent, "puts [the book] into his own words because he doesn't think we could understand it" and David suggests that he and his peers may not engage in the kinds of discussions his teachers want to lead because the rituals and routines of schooling are hopelessly foreign to what he knows. "We don't have a life like that," he told us, "we have a totally different life."

The problem faced by the teachers, then, was how to orchestrate discussions in which students could connect the texts to their lives in an environment that students sometimes saw as disconnected and perhaps even blind to the lives they were leading. The analysis of those discussions suggested the following patterns:

1) In a measure of simple quantity, teachers dominated the discussions. The floor was returned to the teacher after almost every student turn, and when they held the floor, the teachers spoke at far greater length than their students.

2) Teachers used their turns largely to inform, question, and respond. They always informed more than they questioned, and questioned more than they responded, but the three-part structure of their turns was generally consistent with an earlier study of classroom discourse about literature (Marshall, 1989). Students, on the other hand, averaged about two remarks per turn, and those remarks were mostly informative in purpose.

3) The kinds of informative remarks made by students reflected almost exactly the kinds of questions their teachers asked them. Both teachers' and students' contributions were dominated by the summary and interpretation of textual material. Though interpretation was a stated goal for the teachers, the students' participation in the shaping of those

interpretations was minimal.

4) Teachers responded to their students' contributions most often by restating what had been said. At times they evaluated those contributions positively, but generally their response was an opening move in a turn that saw them providing some new information and then asking a follow-up question. The answer to that question would, in turn, lead to yet another respond-inform-question sequence. In such a way, teachers both acknowledged the students' contributions and provided a series of transitions for the ongoing development of the discussion -- a discussion that was almost always in the teacher's control.

In most ways, these patterns parallel almost exactly both the findings from earlier research on classroom discourse (e.g., Barnes, 1976; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Cazden, 1988) and the more specific findings from research on discussions of literature (Marshall, 1989). In fact, the only salient differences between the patterns here and the patterns in our earlier study of discussions in college-bound classrooms (Marshall, 1989) are: 1) a greater tendency among these teachers to make informative statements (64 percent vs. 48 percent in college-bound classrooms); and 2) a greater tendency among these teachers to evaluate students' contributions positively (22 percent here; under 5 percent in the college-bound classrooms).

We might explain these differences by suggesting that the students in lower-track classrooms required more supportive information from their teachers and more supportive response when they participated and, given what we know about the teachers' stated intentions, such an explanation may be persuasive. We will return to the issue of support shortly, but for the present what seems most central are not the relatively minor differences between the patterns in these lower-track classrooms and those in college-bound classrooms, but the pervasive similarity that appears when the patterns are viewed together. The teachers we studied here felt little obligation to provide students with an appropriate interpretation of the texts they read; in fact, they seemed actively opposed to intruding their own reading into the discussion. They wanted their students "to make [literature], both as readers and writers....to be independent interpreters." Unlike their counterparts in college-bound classrooms, who felt a responsibility to both their students' response and the author's intention, the teachers working with lower-track students saw the students' response as primary. And yet, like their counterparts in college-bound classrooms, the teachers working with the lower-track students orchestrated discussions in which their own role was central and in which their students' role was largely to provide brief answers to their questions.

At least two explanations might be offered for the persistence of these patterns. On the one hand, the similarities suggest that the conventions governing classroom discussions are powerful, and that they may often operate in spite of the student audience or the teacher's stated intentions. Presented with the complicated task of managing the talk among a large group of participants and shaping that talk into coherence, teachers may feel that they have no choice but to take the role we have seen them take here. Our literature on teaching has generated few alternative models for how large-group discussions might proceed, and the chances are great that the teachers themselves have seldom experienced those alternatives in their own schooling. Working from experience and logistical necessity, then, teachers leading any group of students in a discussion might find themselves responding, informing, and questioning -- controlling the talk, even when that talk is meant to engage students in more personal forms of exploration.

But though such an argument might explain the general similarities of discussions across contexts, it fails to account finally for the very specific and very profound constraints that this group of teachers and students were facing when they discussed literature in school. It is not simply that the teachers here lacked alternative strategies. That problem was compounded by the fact that the students themselves were so alienated from school, from the texts they were asked to read there, and from the kinds of talk that took place there, that the teachers had to provide a supportive structure for them before the process of personal engagement could even begin. Consider for instance the following exchange between Veronica Carter and one of her students during a discussion of "Raymond's Run." Carter had just asked the class if they had found any problems in the story.

Student: What do you mean by problems?

Teacher: Oh, problems. See, I guess what I'm thinking of is I found some problems in the story -- something that I didn't like that Squeaky said or the way Squeaky thought about something or something that doesn't make sense with you. Is there any problem with the way she tells the story? That's what I mean...That's what I'm trying to have you think about.

Student: And write that down on paper?

Teacher: You got it. How did this story make you feel? What were you feeling when you heard this story?

Student: It didn't make me feel like nothing.

We might point out here that Carter's role is central. We might suggest that she is responding, informing, and questioning as other teachers typically do. We might argue that the student's contributions are minimal. But what seems most telling about the exchange, brief as it is, is the lengths to which Carter goes in inviting her students to speak their minds. We might describe the exchange, in fact, as a teacher-centered dialogue in the service of a student-centered response. Carter is not interested in telling her students the specific problems that she has seen in the story. She is not concerned that they take away the "central" problems, or the "most important" problems. She wants only for them to engage with the text in a way that matters to them. But even at that level she is met with "It didn't make me feel like nothing." And so she must begin again, attempting to arouse her students' interest. To get them beyond that "nothing" she must lead, provoke, dramatize, providing the "security information" that these students may need to develop a personal response. She ends by employing many of the strategies other teachers employ, but her intentions are different, her audience is different, and the difficulties she faces will not be solved by simple answers.

Conclusion

In the genre of research reports such as this one, it is the convention to close with a section entitled "Implications for teaching." Given the findings of the present study, we might suggest that teachers do more to involve their students in classroom talk -- that they more

frequently organize small-group work, say, or more often assign writing tasks that will lead to fruitful large-group discussions. Such suggestions could, in some cases, be helpful. But the problems and patterns that we observed here cannot, we think, be adequately addressed by simple changes in classroom strategy, no matter how intelligent or well-crafted those strategies might be. Nor can they be addressed by a call for more reader-oriented approaches to literary texts or for a rethinking of what we mean by knowledge of literature. These teachers, after all, already believed that their students' responses were primary, and their efforts were directed toward nurturing those responses. The problems and patterns we observed, rather, appear due to larger social and cultural forces that seem too often to resist our strategies and our theories, just as David, whose saw his life as "different," seemed to resist his teacher's efforts to invite him into another kind of community. The challenge, then, is to recall that what we do with literature is a small part of what we do in school, that school is only part of the larger culture, and that that larger culture will always find a way to enter our classrooms, perhaps in the person of David. Studies such as this one may remind us of students like David, but only an imaginative reconsideration of the process of schooling may help us know how to teach him.

References

Applebee, A.N. (1989a). The teaching of literature in programs with reputations for excellence in English (Report No. 1.1). Albany, NY: Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

Applebee, A.N. (1989b). A study of book-length works taught in high school English courses (Report No. 1.2). Albany, NY: Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

Barnes, D. (1976). From communication to curriculum. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.

Cazden, C. (1988). Classroom discourse. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hillocks, G. (in press). Literary texts in classrooms. Forthcoming in Teachers and texts. National Society for the Study of Education.

Langer, J.A. (1989). The process of understanding literature (Report No. 2.1). Albany, NY: Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

Marshall, J.D. (1987). The effects of writing on students' understanding of literary texts. Research in the Teaching of English, 21, 30-63.

Marshall, J.D. (1989). Patterns of discourse in classroom discussions of literature (Report No. 2.9). Albany, NY: Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature.

Mehan, H. (1979). Learning lessons. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (in press). Student engagement: When recitation becomes conversation. Forthcoming in Contemporary research on teaching. National Society for the Study of Education.

Sinclair, J., & Coulthard, R. (1975). Towards an analysis of discourse. London: Oxford Press.

Appendix

AN EXCERPT FROM LAURA PETERS' THIRD CLASS DISCUSSION OF OF MICE AND MEN.

Peters: Slim is a very important figure on the ranch. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

What are we told about his physical appearance? **(Question/Text/Describe)**

Student: He is very tall and thin. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

Peters: All right, tall and skinny. **(Respond/Restate)**

Obviously with a name like Slim. **(Text/Inform/Describe)**

What else? **(Question/Text/Describe)**

Student: Long, black hair. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

Peters: Long, black hair. **(Respond/Restate)**

Does anyone remember anything about his face? **(Question/Text/Describe)**

Student: Hatchet-faced.

Peters: All right, he's described as hatchet-faced. **(Respond/Restate)**

Now that's an interesting description. **(Inform/Text/Evaluate)**

Does anybody know what it means? Hatchet-faced? **(Question/General/Describe)**

Student: Scars? **(Inform/General/Describe)**

Chicken pox maybe? **(Inform/General/Describe)**

Peters: Good guess. **(Respond/Positive)**

I'm not quite sure it means that. **(Respond/Negative)**

Student: Maybe narrow features. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

Peters: I think it might mean more than that. **(Respond/Negative)**

Very sharp lines. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

A chin that protrudes out. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

If you think of the idea of a hatchet - a hatchet carved very severely. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

There are sharp lines on a hatchet. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

And I think that's what it means. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

All right, anything else for Slim? **(Question/Text/Describe)**

Student: He was ageless. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

He could be 35 or 50. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

Peters: He doesn't show his age. **(Respond/Restate)**

You really couldn't tell from the appearance of his face or his body. **(Respond/Elaborate)**

Student: He wore blue jeans and a denim jacket. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

Peters: This is pretty standard uniform, for most of the men on the ranch will wear blue jeans and a denim jacket. **(Respond/Elaborate)**

We said this about George and Lennie also. **(Inform/Previous class/Describe)**

What else? **(Question/Text/Describe)**

Student: His hands were large and clean but very delicate. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

Peters: Okay, that's an interesting point. **(Respond/Positive)**

First of all, when you think of somebody who's very strong, but yet there's a delicacy about his touch... **(Inaudible)**

So, he has large, lean hands. **(Respond/Restate)**

And what does lean mean? **(Question/General/Describe)**

Student: Thin. **(Inform/General/Describe)**

Peters: Joe?

Student: He was a skinner.

Peters: Okay. Actually he's called a jerk line skinner. And what that means is that he could drive a team of mules. **(Respond/Elaborate)**

And it took a special talent to do that. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**

And that's one of the reasons that Slim is so respected on the ranch. **(Inform/Text/Describe)**